N.B. I've not read this through so any absurdities of spelling or statement I ask you to forgive. D

Sat. April 9th 1960

Northwick Lodge.
Harrow on the Hill

My Dearest René

It was a great treat to see you again, and Joan — thank you very much for coming. I was so glad to see Joan looking so well & young — as for you, of course, you look exactly the same as you did 30 years ago except ~~not so the~~ ears thin in the face. (a!) What awfully nice children Rosilind* & Robin are.

How do you spell it? with Rosalind?

I thought those sailing-vessel models most beautiful — how does he do it — a on so tiny a scale & looking absolutely convincing — I suppose it's the 'innocent eye' again. I loved the great drawing of the great ship with it's incredible number of sails! Again the innocent eye. They get the entire feeling without, of course, realising it. So when he asks me to do the billowing sail I hardly knew what to do, because all I could do was to introduce a kind of academic impressionism ~~with is the~~ — and it is precisely the absence of this quality which made his drawing so good. It's an impossible problem.*

* When a child asks one to draw something one feels rather as though one were being ~~asked~~ asked, unwittingly, to teach them a really bad thing — its an appalling difficult problem and there aint no answer to it either within our civilizational phase.

I'm sorry I had nothing to offer them but china tea & biscuits — not exactly exciting for either of them, I fear.

When did Rosalind get her auburn hair from? Either Joan or you must have

②

a fairly close ancestor who had red hair, because, I seem to remember, in that book about nigrescence that the incidence of redness in hair is governed by redness of hair in some near ancestor — I forget how it works. I know it's getting less, along with the fair-heads.

About 'Goidelic' — My scatter-brained information over the years, if I remember aright suggests that it ~~[illegible]~~ first occurs in MSS about A.D. 660. And it came about in this wise: ~~in those~~ in the 4th century ~~[illegible]~~ some Irish (Scotti) established themselves in North West Wales (Gwynedd*) ~~the name of [illegible] their settlers~~ these invaders were called Féni and they gave their name to that part of Wales, ~~as~~ & Féni, or the area of the Féni, gave, in Brittonic Celtic, the word Gwynedd. pronounced gwéen-eth (th as in 'then') in Latin this was called Venedotia. The word féni implies 'mixed tribes' — a fusion of chaps. Well, when later on, sometime in the 6th or 5th cent, Xtian missionaries from Wales ~~[illegible]~~ went to Ireland to convert the natives, they called the Irish 'Gwyddel'* (it is still the Welsh word for an Irishman) because that was the word they knew about on

* I don't know why there is this difference, Gwyn— & gwydd— but I know they are cognate forms & come from Féni

③

this side of the Irish Channel. It would seem that a bit later the Irish themselves adopted the word in its Irish form, Goidel. from which we, in English, get Gael. I knew all this when you asked me, but I could not say it clearly, in speaking. It's rum how one can't remember anything when a chap asks a simple question. How badly I ~~should~~ should have fared in an aural or (is it oral?) examination!

Well, in later times, philologists seem to have (perhaps unfortunately) decided to use the terms Brittonic (or Bythonic) and Goidelic to indicate the two branches of Celtic speech-form, videlicet: 'P' Celtic and 'Q' Celtic, because of the various words which in Welsh or Breton ~~an~~ have 'p' but in Erse have 'Q' – or, I think, something corresponding with Q – Ch perhaps. One obvious example is *mac* son (genitive *maqui*) which in Welsh is *mab* or *map* – hence all the *aps* & *abs*, for the 'm' dropped out, in the case of chaps names, but is retained still, otherwise, thus ~~the~~ 'The Son' is *Y Mab**. Again the Goidelic for 'who' was ~~of~~ *Quei*, but in ~~Bre~~ Welsh *PWY* & so on.

In Gwynedd it was Cunedda from Southern Scotland who drove out or contained the

*shades of Joan Hussey and the filioque! & go back to your bloody monastery.

Irish ~~[illegible]~~ invaders & it was he ~~[illegible]~~ who established the Welsh dynasties. round about 400 A.D.

But in South Wales the Irish also had a footing & a bigger one ~~and~~ they were not driven out but remained & became Welsh speaking*. They were Dési from the Waterford area & they gave their name to South-West Wales, called Dyfed (pronounced dove-ed). It is thought pretty certain that most of the 'Mabinogion'* derives from them. A modern Irish scholar called Proinsias Mac Cana, lecturer in Irish in the Department of Welsh at Aberystwyth has written a book about the tale of Branwen daughter of Llŷr which seems to me to prove the Irish origin of ~~that~~ at least that section of the ~~[illegible]~~ Mabinogi. Chaps are working a good bit on the relationship of all those Welsh tales with their Irish counterparts & it looks rather as ~~if~~ though a very great deal of the whole is ultimately of ~~[illegible]~~ Goidelic origin. But of course it's impossible to express an opinion ~~[illegible]~~ really, unless one really knows all the stuff backwards. The cross-currents are very many & ~~one~~ chap establishes a theory that is knocked to pieces by some other chaps next year. It's about as involved a tangle as you could wish for. And of course they grind axes a good bit, which, as a layman, one does not readily detect. ~~But you~~

Sandy – Sorry about this boring letter – I must

* Thus the joke that St David was 'Irish' & St Patrick 'Welsh'!

* by which I mean the Mabinogi proper i.e. the first four tales in our English translation.

5

to write you a proper one but got bogged down ~~[illegible]~~ in these bloody theories about Celts.

It is now Sunday & I want to post this — tell me when you actually receive it — if you do. These sodding posts are the limit. I hope you do that thing for the 20th Cent. Review or whatever it's called — whatever you say will be worth ~~[illegible]~~ while. But it's a bloody bore doing it at all — I well know that.

Can't get on at all with my picture. Feel quite exhausted with the complication of it. What a long time ago it is when I did the bloody things about 20 times more quickly — but that will never return. Last year when I was seeing Elri (that's the Welsh form of Valerie) I felt quite young again though it was only a bloody pain all the time — but now I feel useless & aged — I am reminded of old Fr. John Gray saying of poor Reggie Savage: "the man was born to failure" — do you remember his saying that — on the lawn outside the porch at Pigotts looking toward the orchard. I never thanked Joan (Siwan) for her

The picture of Aphrodite over the fire-place is called The Lee-Shore. In my heart of hearts I don't like that either — it's too tight & fussed. What I want to do is one full of all the complication & allusion but ~~[illegible]~~ executed with the freedom & directness that was to be in my still-lifes & landscapes — that's what I want to do before I die.

6

most welcome gifts — munera of huge eggs. I've never seen such huge eggs — I've eaten four of them already — I like eggs best of all — well & olives & lemon & sugar. I drink hot lemon & sugar in water every evening — about six lemons a day — because I must drink something — & whisky is impossible except in small quantities, for a number of excellent reasons.

~~One thing~~ Oh, and the flowers — I do thank Joan for the flowers — they look heavenly now I've put them into a thing on the table by the window. There don't seem to be any real flowers any longer. The sorts one buys at the florists are bloody useless — God! what a civilisation.

One last thing about Celts: If you look at the map & turn it round so that the top is East & not ~~North~~ North you'll see what the ancients meant when they said that "Ireland is an island opposite northern Spain" — the chaps are finding increasing evidence for continuous direct communication by thalassic routes between Gaul & Ireland & Wales & the Isles (of Scotland) — we get so used to thinking of the Dover-Calais-Basle-Rome route (made worse by Belloc & Co) that we forget that after the Angle & Saxon invasion the western fringe still has direct contact by this route — so that St David & Patrick & other Celtic saints went to Lerins off the south coast of France — & Lerins is believed to have had an ascetic tradition coming from the Thebaid in Egypt. That accounts for a lot. I think this 'Celtic' thalassic imperium in east + in which I cannot go into here. There are other aspects of this 'Celtic'

Much love Dai.

René

(5)

that their mythology provided ~~[illegible]~~ a good part of the Mabinogion — for it is becoming increasingly evident that at least large parts of the Mabinogion are ~~[illegible]~~ Welsh assimilations of Irish stuff. Chaps are working hard on this matter at the present time. An Irish scholar, Proinsias Mac Cana, present lecturer in Irish in the Department of Welsh at University College, Aberystwyth has written a book examining the Welsh story of Branwen daughter of Llŷr, which I have, & which as far as I can see, proves the Irish origin of this bit of the Mabinogi fairly conclusively. But, of course, this is all highly professional & the province of specialists, as I am not competent to judge.

You see, also, that (especially prior to the Angevin 'conquest' of Ireland) the contacts between the Welsh princes & poets & the Irish and the Irish-Norse were considerable. & there was clearly an interflow of ~~[illegible]~~ all sorts. But gradually, as the middle-ages wore on, & Wales became more & more part of the English zone of influence and more & more feudalized & anglicized in every way, those contacts ceased.

It is interesting that Giraldus, who shows a

NB. When I say on page 8, about the connection between Ile des Lerins in the Mediterranean & the Celtic monastics — they did not, presumably, get there by a wholly thalassic route but went to [illegible] in northern France & then travelled through France by land to the south. It may be that they went to Corbilo at the mouth of the Loire (St Nazaire) because that port in pre-historic times, was the tin-trade port. It is certain ~~that the~~ ~~[illegible]~~ 11th & 12th Cents. Vikings did not get into the Mediterranean by the Pillars of Hercules until quite late — ~~[illegible]~~.

In the Ynglinga Saga the Straits of Gibraltar is called Norvasund, but I can't find the bit about the first Viking who sailed through them. I can't think where I read it.

It comes in the Heimskringla

considerable sympathy for the native Welsh, showed the most horrible lack of sympathy & antipathy towards the Irish. For him, as an Angevin Norman-Welsh cleric with his brothers & other relatives actively involved in the conquest of Ireland, his attitude is as anti-Irish as, say, the centuries later Elizabethan bastards, such as Spenser the poet. And, of course, in modern times, owing to the Irish remaining Catholic & the Welsh becoming Nonconformist, the gulf has grown & grown into a still worse dislike & misunderstanding. So that what ought to be a close feeling of understanding & affection has become ~~that~~ by centuries of buggeration of one sort or another an almost total estrangement.

Scholars, however, who know about the intimate relationship of these differing strands of the 'Celtic' tradition are well aware of how sadly things have gone. Of course, it is true & a very ~~crucial~~ crucial truth, that the creation of the Welsh ruling families from 400 A.D. was the work of Romano-British blokes (Cunedda in particular) from the southern uplands of Scotland. As I have tried to point out in various places the story called the Dream of Maxim Wledig especially typifies this Romanic connection. Thus, one side of Welsh tradition, and politically its most important side, is wholly other from the Irish or Scottic tradition. And this is very important. But on the mythological side & in its essential Celticity the Welsh & the Irish thing ~~is~~ of a common cultural stem.

But, in the case of the Welsh, the Roman occupation of Britain makes all the difference for it made them, for all time, part of Britannia and divides them politically from the chaps across the Irish Sea.

Asser, king Alfred's biographer, & subsequently bishop of Sherborne, was, as you know, a Welshman from St Davids (bishop of it, I think, not sure) — and that was when? about 900 AD. He just ~~[illegible]~~ simply calls 'Wales' 'Britannia' in his writings. It was only very slowly that the Welsh princes used the term Cymry* (Welsh people) & Cymru (Wales) before that they called themselves kings of the Britons or of Britain and the bards tended to do this for much longer still. Thus Llywelyn's bard (1282) writes:

"For the death of all Britain, a death-song for the leader".

So it is important to recognise that the ~~politically~~ political legend & myth & reality as far as Wales is concerned is altogether conditioned & determined by the Roman occupation & then by the close and constant ~~[illegible]~~ Angle, Norman, English pressures of every conceivable sort. But that-

Sherborne in Dorset.

* literally 'people of one kind', 'compatriots' if you like. (older Celtic, Combroges)

Cymry & Cymru are pronounced the same, in fact in Middle-Welsh the land Cymru was spelt Cymry like the race.

at a deeper level, ~~were~~ 'race' & poetic & musical etc etc etc forms & 'inward feeling' is involved they belong to the older Celtic & pre-Celtic complex of stuff. And here the sea is very important because, in a kind of way, there was a very real 'link' by thalassic routes between the western parts of Britain and the Western Isles of Scotland & Ireland & Brittany & indeed, later, the Scandinavian thing. For ~~All~~ these Celtic ~~saints~~ saints of the 5th & 6th Centuries ~~obviously~~ the Western seas were obviously their main thoroughfares. They seem to have established a kind of Celtic imperium of the spirit all over the western ~~approaches~~. approaches — in some ways, a very vague, it extended from Iceland to island of Lerins (off south France) which had contacts with the Thebaid in Egypt? hence the 'Celtic' religious tradition of ascetism in its wildest forms? Previously this sea thing has not been seen in its proper importance — mainly because we find it hard not to think in terms of Dover-Calais-Basle-Rome (like old Belloc). And another thing because we used to think the early chaps in tiny boats were afraid of the open sea & must have hugged the shore — whereas that's the most dangerous thing to do, as sailors have always known. Also we've looked at the map from the wrong angle if one slews it round so that the top the north is pointing east & not north, one can see what these early chaps meant when they said, that 'Ireland is an island opposite Spain.'

Gruffydd ap Cynan prince of North Wales, in late 11th & early ~~the~~ 12th Cents. had an Irish mother, because his father had fled to the Irish-Norse of Dublin & he was in fact born at, or brought up in ~~in~~, the place called Swords — in the area of Columcille near Dublin. & he regained his Welsh patrimony by the use of Irish & Norse mercenaries. Later he made some with long-ships & men with axes. he assembled a fleet in the Orkneys.

reform touching Welsh metrics (poetic & musical) & for this he drew on Irish models. This much is a continuing tradition in Welsh circles, though just what he in fact did is not known. Another Welsh prince who was a poet, Hywel ap Owain Gwynedd, later in the 12th Cent., also had an Irish mother, & he too, is believed to have modelled his poetry to some extent on the Irish. He wrote a wonderful poem in praise of North Wales, which is believed to echo an Irish type of poem concerned with the beauties of the natural scene — the ordinary Welsh court poets did not much use this theme of nature — they continued more in the tradition of the Gododdin poetry, in praise of heroes & deeds. Later of course, in the 14th cent (Dafydd ap Gwilym) they caught the troubadour thing about nature & girls.

To go with letter of
~~29 Feb 1960~~ 9 April 1960

WHO IS A BOASTER?

Typical top:

Probably draft of letter of
~~29 Feb 1960~~ 9 April 1960

The note written on p.1 reads

In the Ynglinga Saga the Straits of Gibraltar are called Norvasund, but I can't find the bit about the first Viking who sailed through them. I can't think where I read it.*

* Chicken-feed! But I'm all at sea (Mabinogion)

Narvesund
(p. 156)

at the bottom of page 8/MS/

Is this part of
another letter? It
doesn't seem to tie
in although it's about
exactly the same thing.

9 April 60

Children's drawing